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Guest Artist: Gary Lee Nelson

Gary Lee Nelson

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*"It is
my plan
to build
a school
of music
second
to none."*

—William
Grant Egbert
(1867–1928)
Founder,
Ithaca
Conservatory
of Music

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

ITHACA

VISITING ARTISTS SERIES 1998-99

Gary Lee Nelson, composer

**Concert of Works for Midi Horn, Computers,
and Digital Synthesizers**

Star Music (1993)

Quintessence (1986, 94)

Sums and Differences (1987)

One sighs . . . fits all (1996)

Mountain Song (1992)

Colony (1994)

Goss (1993)

Variations on a Theme and Process of Frederic Rzewski (1987)

**Ford Hall Auditorium
Thursday, October 22, 1998
8:15 p.m.**

THE ARTIST

Gary Lee Nelson, who teaches at Oberlin College, began his musical studies somewhat late at the age of 14 with an interest in both composition and performance. At 17, he accepted a position as tuba player in the Youngstown Philharmonic Orchestra and began undergraduate work at Youngstown State University. After graduation in 1963 with degrees in composition and performance, he attended the University of Michigan, and was a member of the Toledo Orchestra, and the instrumental ensembles of the Composers Forum and the ONCE Festival where he worked with Roger Reynolds, Alvin Lucier, Eric Dolphy, and Morton Feldman. His composition energies were recharged in Ann Arbor as a result of exposure to a wide range of new music, particularly the electronic works of Stockhausen, Berio, and Davidovsky.

In 1965 he enrolled part-time at the Institute of Sonology of the University of Utrecht and began to study electronic and computer music. In 1966, he returned to the United States to begin graduate studies in composition with Paul Pisk and Robert Wykes at Washington University. During his tenure in Saint Louis, he developed interests in research and a love for teaching that have to led his present career as a composer in academia.

In 1974 he accepted Oberlin College's offer to become director of the Technology in Music and Related Arts (TIMARA) Program. Oberlin had already established a firm base in electronic and computer music and this move enabled him to take a giant step forward in his research, teaching, and creative activities. He has performed more than 250 concerts in the United States and abroad since 1987.

Dr. Nelson has been a guest reseracher and/or consultant in computer music at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA) at Stanford University, Bell Laboratories, the Institute for Research and Coordination of Acoustics and Music (IRCAM) in Paris, the Center for Music Research at Florida State University, and the Computer Music Project at Melbourne University in Australia.

Currently his research is focused on "algorithmic composition," the design of computer programs that model the human composition process. Most of his music during the past fifteen years has been aimed at defining and refining this exciting means of making music.

He has concentrated on techniques for using computers in live performance. Along with Oberlin music engineer John Talbert, he designed a "MIDI Horn." This device allows him to control an array of computers and synthesizers using breath and articulation that is similar to that of a woodwind or brass instrument. With programs of his own design and the MIDI Horn he is able to merge the roles of composer, conductor, and performer in music that has been well-received in more than 100 concerts since 1986. One of his recent pieces, *Fractal Mountains*, won first prize in an international competition for microtonal music at the Third Coast New Music Festival in San Antonio. The same work has been chosen by Wergo Recordings of West Germany for inclusion in a compact disc anthology of computer music.